

FROM FR. CHRIS ALIMAJI'S DESK
Reflections on World Mission Sunday

As we keep celebrating the Year of St. Joseph, while experiencing several upheavals around the world, the message that the harvest is plentiful and the need for more missionaries become even more urgent. The Scripture Readings today are Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrew 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52 and Psalm 126, on this Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

The essence of World Mission Sunday is the Evangelization of Peoples, that they may hear the good news of Jesus Christ and be saved. The Prophet Jeremiah said: "The Lord has delivered his people, the remnant of Israel." (Jer. 31:7). That era would be an era of jubilation and exultation in all the nations. As the apostle Paul says to the Romans, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23). God is reconciling the world to himself through his free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ, (cf. Rom. 6:23); for God loved the world so much and sent his Christ into it, (cf. Jn 3:16). The salvation of the world is through God's own initiative and has always been.

RE-EVANGELIZATION: On this World Mission weekend for the evangelization of peoples, our minds go back to Pope St. John Paul II's re-evangelization of peoples. For me writing my papers on this topic, it has much to do with cultures. People are converted to Christianity from their various cultures. In Cultural Anthropology you study and examine how people are products of their cultures. In evangelization of peoples, the Gospel baptizes the cultures, as it were, lifting up aspects and traces of the Good News in those cultures to make them wholesome. God has been present in the cultures and the peoples from the very beginning. As the Prophet says: "I will gather them from the ends of the world, ... They departed in tears, but I will console them and guide them. (Jer. 31:8, 9). While this might strictly refer to the return of the exiles, God also exiled the world from himself through the Angel in the Garden of Eden, (cf. Gen. 3:23-24). It is necessary that today we respond in the psalm and say: "The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy." (Ps. 126:3). Therefore, in evangelization of the peoples, the gospel is brought to the peoples of all cultures. The Church enriches the cultures, and the cultures equally enrich the Church when it takes from the cultures. The missionaries must be open to what is in the culture, and not to condemn it as altogether evil, for God is already present there. Re-evangelization has much to do with strengthening and re-vitalizing lapsed Christians who had fallen as a result of evil influences and other competing religions.

MISSION: Here we also emphasize the importance of aid to the missions. In the spirit of missionary cooperation, collections are taken on this weekend for the work of mission. The needy territories are helped to be on their feet, and so join in evangelization. Missionaries and mission workers are trained for the work of evangelization. Through the ministries of mission workers God is gathering his chosen people from around the world, (Jer. 31:7-9). The epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that God sent the Lord Jesus on mission when he came into the world, (cf. Heb. 5:1-6). Through the works of evangelization, Jesus – the Church opens the eyes of the blind, bringing peace, justice, reconciliation, enlightenment, good relationship, care, love, salvation, etc. to all. How are you contributing your own quota to the spread of the Good News around the world? You too have been called and chosen. Work all the harder to justify your call to discipleship. To God be honor and glory and kingship forever and ever! Amen.